

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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R 191324Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7700
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1100

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

EO 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS/ PGOV, TC
SUBJ: ZAYID'S VISIT TO NORTHERN EMIRATES -- LITTLE ACCOMPLISHED

REF: ABU DHABI 1033

BEGIN SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR'S MEETINGS WITH UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID AND WITH SEVERAL NORTHERN RULERS THIS WEEK REVEALED THAT ZAYID'S WEEK-LONG TOUR INCONCLUSIVE IN RESOLVING KEY DISPUTES OVER CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO NAME HIS SON AS ARMEDFORCES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, OTHER EMIRATES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEDERAL BUDGET, DEMANDS BY SOME RULERS FOR MORE CONCESSIONAL FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. NEVERTHELESS, ALL RULERS CONTINUE TO PROFESS ATTACHMENT TO FEDERAL UNION (ALTHOUGH WITH REDUCED ROLE IN IT FOR ABU DHABI BUREAUCRACY). END SUMMARY

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1. DURING SERIES OF MEETINGS ON APRIL 16 AND 17 WITH MINDEF SHAIKH MUHAMMAD, SHAIKH RASHID OF DUBAI, SHAIKH SAQR OF RAS AL KHAIMAH, SAHIKH HAMAD OF FUJAIRAH, AND UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID, I WAS EXPOSED TO THEIR VARIOUS REACTIONS TO ZAYID'S RECENT WEEK LONG STAY IN NORTHERN EMIRATES. SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHILE SHAIKH ZAYID PERIODICALLY VISITS DIFFERENT NORTHERN EMIRATES, HE NORMALLY GOES FOR A BRIEF PERIOD AND FOR A SINGLE EVENT. THIS

WAS THE FIRST TIME IN AT LEAST TWO YEARS THAT HE REMAINED UP NORTH NORMALLY GOES FOR A BRIEF PERIOD AND FOR SINGLE EVENT. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN AT LEAST TWO YEARS THAT HE REMAINED UP NORTH FOR A WEEK (APRIL 4-10), USING THE SMALL OASIS VILLAGE OF KHAWANIJ IN THE EMIRATE OF DUBAI AS HIS HEADQUARTERS TO RECEIVE THE NORTHERN RULERS AND SUBSEQUENTLY CALLING ON THEM IN THEIR CAPITALS AND VISITING A SELECT NUMBER OF PROJECTS (I.E., DUBAI DRYDOCK, FUJAIRAH HILTON, AJMAN SMALL SHIP REPAIR FACILITY, RAS AL KHAIMAH HOSPITAL.

2. WHILE EACH RULER WITH WHOM I SPOKE REFLECTED A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF ZAYID'S TOUR, IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT ZAYID ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE IN DEALING WITH VARIOUS ISSUES SET FORTH IN PREVIOUS REPORTING TELEGRAM (REFTEL). WHILE EMIRATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FEDERAL BUDGET WAS A MAJOR TOPIC OF DISCUSSION AT ALL HIS STOPS, AND ZAYID IS STILL MULLING OVER WHETHER OR NOT TO SIGN THE 1978 BUDGET SINCE OTHER EMIRATES (PARTICULARLY DUBAI) ARE NOT PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY, MAIN PROBLEMS DEALT WITH CONSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES.

3. ON FORMER, MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS DISPUTE WITH DUBAI OVER UNIFICATION OF ARMED FORCES WHICH CENTERS AROUND UNILATERAL FEDERALIZATION OF ALL REGULAR FORCES AND ZAYID'S APPOINTMENT OF HIS SECOND SON, SHAIKH SULTAN, AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. BOTH SHAIKH RASHID OF DUBAI AND HIS SON MINDEF SHAIKH MUHAMMAD MADE IT VERY CLEAR TO ME THAT THEY FELT ZAYID HAD NO POWER UNDER 1971
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PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION TO APPOINT SHAIKH SULTAN. THEY INSISTED NOMINATION SHOULD FIRST HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS; THEN BY SUPREME DEFENSE COUNCIL (COMPOSED OF PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER, MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE, INTERIOR AND EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN ABU DHABIANS AND DUBAIANS); AND THEN BY SUPREME COUNCIL OF SEVEN RULERS. ZAYID ON OTHER HAND COMPLAINED THAT ISSUE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH WITHIN SUPREME DEFENSE COUNCIL AND THERE NOTHING IN CONSTITUTION TO PREVENT HIS EXERCISING HIS RIGHT TO APPOINT C-IN-C WHO IS INTENDED TO SYMBOLIZE LONG-SOUGHT MILITARY UNIFICATION PRESAGED BY NOVEMBER 1976 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ABOLISHING RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL EMIRATES TO MAINTAIN THEIR DEFENSE FORCES. SHAIKH MUHAMMAD INDICATED TO ME THAT HE PREPARED TO ACCEPT CONCEPT OF ELIMINATION OF REGIONAL (I.E., EX-EMIRATE) COMMANDS AND INCORPORATION OF ALL UNITS INTO STANDARD BRIGADE STRUCTURES BUT HE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT HE FEELS YOUNG SHAIKH SULTAN BIN ZAYID NOT QUALIFIED BE C-IN-C OF ARMED FORCES. MUHAMMAD ADMITTED THAT RECENT PURCHASE OF SCORPION TANKS FROM UK (ABU DHABI 1007) IS FOR DUBAI-BASED CENTRAL COMMAND, NOTING ABU DHABI HAD BOUGHT FRENCH AMX-30 TANKS LAST YEAR. FROM HIS COMMENTS IT EMERGED THAT MUHAMMAD STILL WANTS DUBAI TO HAVE AN AUTONOMOUS MILITARY CAPABILITY.

4. THE ECONOMIC TURNDOWN AND ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENT CREDIT WERE KEY ISSUES IN ZAYID'S TALKS IN RAS AL-KHAIMAH. SHAIKH SAQR COMPLAINED TO ME THAT AFTER RECEIVING SUBSTANTIAL CREDITS IN 1976 AND EARLY 1977 FROM UAE CURRENCY BOARD TO FINANCE NUMBER OF PROJECTS IN HIS EMIRATE, THIS SOURCE OF CREDIT NO LONGER AVAILABLE TO HIM. MEANWHILE, ABU DHABI CONTINUES TO PROVIDE GRANT AID OR CONCESSIONAL FINANCING TO NUMEROUS FOREIGN COUNTRIES. SAQR FELT HE GOT LITTLE SYMPATHY FROM ZAYID FOR HIS PROBLEMS ALTHOUGH SAQR HAD EMBARKED ON NUMBER OF NEW COMMITMENTS IN EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING ADDITIONAL CREDITS. IF CURRENCY BOARD NOT A DEVELOPMENT BANK, THEN UAE INSTITUTIONALLY MUST FIND ANOTHER MEANS OF PROVIDING INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING,
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SAQR INSISTED. SAQR SAID HE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE MOVE AHEAD ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND WOULD FIND FUNDING "SOMEWHERE." AS FAR AS RAS AL-KHAIMAH BORDER DISPUTE WITH OMAN WAS CONCERNED, ITS LACK OF RESOLUTION WAS A PROBLEM. SURPRISINGLY SAQR COMMENTED THAT MATTER IS IN HAND OF UAE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND THAT ITS RESOLUTION IS FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
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EXDIS

5. ABOUT ONLY MATTE WHICH ZAYID'S VISIT MAY HAVE RESOLVED IS PROBLEMOF OVERLY-TIGHT ENTRY REGULATIONS. ALL RULERS AGREED THAT FEDERAL RESTRICTIONS ON UAE VISAS HAD CAUSED NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES AND THAT SOME KIND OF SEVEN-DAY TRANSIT VISA AVAILABLE UPON ARRIVAL AT AIRPORTS SHOULD BE RESINSTATED, PARTICULARLY FOR BUSINESSMEN FROM FREIENDLY COUNTRIES. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS EXPECTEC TO STUDY SEVERAL PROPOSALS AND ISSUE NEW REGULATIONS SHORTLY.

6. WHEN IN MY MEETING WITH SHAIKH ZAYID ON APRIL 17, I TOUCHED ON HIS RECENT STAY IN THE NORTHERN EMIRATES, PRESIDENT FURROWED HIS BBROWS AND REFLECTED HIS EXASPERATION WITH THE CONSTANT BACKBITING AND COMPLAINTS TO WHICH HE IS SUBJECTED. (HE HAD JUST PREVIOUSLY COMPLAINED ABOUT THE GENERAL DISARRAY IN THE ARAB WORLD REPORTED SEPTAL.) WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL ON HIS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, ZAYID DISMISSED THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISPUTE, SAYING THIS WAS SIMPLY A DEVICE TO AVOID HAVING TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION.

7. COMMON THEME OF BOTH RASHID AND SAQR AND TO LESSER EXTENT
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OF SHAIKH HAMAD OF FUJAIRAH WAS THAT THEY ARE COMMITTED TO UAE FEDERALISM AND WISH MAKE IT WORK. MINDEF MUHAMMAD NOTED THAT UAE IS UNIQUE EXPERIMENT IN FEDERALISM IN ARAB WORLD. IF HAS NEVER WORKED BEFORE AND THEE ARE MANY PRESSURES AGAINST UNION "PARTICULARLY IN ABU DHABI." WHILE NORTHERN RULERS WICH TO COOPERATE WITH ZAYID AND FONMIN SUWAIDI (IN MANY RESPECTS THE REAL UAE PRIME MINISTER) THEY ALL ARGUED THAT TO MAKE FEDERALISM WORK, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST BEE SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM ABU DHABI EMIRATE GOVERNMENT. LATTER THEY BELIEVE IS MISMANAGED AND OVERLOADED WITH EXPATRIATES WHO HAVE THEIR OWN SPECIAL INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL INTERESTS TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE.

8. WE ALSO HEARD FOR FIRST TIME OF A PROPOSAL TO MOVE GOVERNMENT OF ABU DHABI EMIRATE AWAY FROM CITY OF ABU DHABI TO INLAND TOWN OF AL AIN. LATTER IS BECOMING AN INCRASINGLY ATTTRACTIVE CITY AND IS SEAT OF NEW UAE UNIVERSITY AND OF IMPORTANT MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. MANY ABU DHABI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS COME FROM AL AIN AND MAINTAIN WEEKEND RESIDENCE THERE. WERE THIS MOVE TO TAKE PLACE, IT JUST MIGHT PROVIDE NEEDED SEPARATION BETWEEN ABU DHABI EMIRATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. LATTER WOULD CONTINUE TO BE LOCATED IN ABU DHABI TOWN WHICH MIGHT THEN TAKE ON MORE OF THE ATMOSPHERE OF A FEDERAL CITY, THEREBY REDUCING DEMANDS (MAINLY FROM DUBAI) FOR REVIVAL OF PROJECT FOR NEW FEDEERAL CIPATAL - AL KARAMAH - TO BE BUILT ON ABU DHABI - DUBAI BORDER. LATTER PROJECT INCREASINGLY UNREALISTIC AS UAE FEDERAL MINISTRIES AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS SINK DEEPER ROOTS INTO SOIL OF ABU DHABI TOWN.

9. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF CONTINUING MALAISE IN RELATIONS
AMONG THE SEVERAL EMIRATES, WE DO NOT SEE THIS SITUATION AS LEADING
TO BREAK UP OF THE UAE. EVENTUALLY, WE BELIEVE THERE WILL BE
SOME ACCOMMODATION ON THE QUESTION OF ZAYID'S APPOINTMENT OF
SHAIKH SULTAN. ALSO, A WAY WILL BE FOUND TO PROVIDE NEW DEVELOP-
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MENT FINANCING TO POORER EMIRATES. NEVERTHELESS, ZAYID'S NORTHERN
VISIT HAS AGAIN MIRRORED THE UNRESOLVED WEAKNESSES OF THIS LOOSE
CONFEDERATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR PURSUING COURSES OF ACTION
WHICH WILL SUPPORT THE UNION.

10. MEMCONS OF MY MEETINGS WITH NORTHERN EMIRATE RULERS ARE
BEING POUCHED TO NEA/ARP.
DICKMAN

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